

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:
providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections;

determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

outputting a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving a query includes:
incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein outputting the response further includes:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area;
and

depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

8. A method for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:
providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

11. A method for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

14. An apparatus for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

- a memory having program instructions;
- a display screen; and
- a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receive a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections;

determine whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

determine whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and
output a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

17. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to:

incorporate in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporate in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

18. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and

depict the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the processor is further configured to denote the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the processor is further configured to denote the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

21. An apparatus for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

a memory having program instructions;

a display screen; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

receive a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

output a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

22. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

24. An apparatus for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:

a memory having program instructions;

a display screen; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

receive a query to define a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections and

including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

output a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

25. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

26. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

27. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for defining and identifying geographic areas, the system comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections;

determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

outputting a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

28. The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 28, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

30. The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein receiving a query includes:

incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

31. The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein outputting the response further includes:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and

depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

32. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

33. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

34. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus

sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

36. The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

37. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

38. The computer-readable medium of claim 37, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

39. The computer-readable medium of claim 38, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

40. A system for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:
means for providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

means for receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections;

means for determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

means for determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

means for outputting a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

41. The system of claim 40, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

43. The system of claim 40, wherein means for receiving a query includes:
means for incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

means for incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

44. The system of claim 40, wherein means for outputting the response further includes:

means for incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and

means for depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

45. The system of claim 44, wherein means for depicting the subregions and sections further includes means for denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

46. The system of claim 5, wherein means for depicting the subregions and sections further includes means for denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

47. A system for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:
means for providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

means for receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query includes a, indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

means for outputting a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

49. The system of claim 47, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

50. A system for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:
means for providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

means for receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query includes an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

means for outputting a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

51. The system of claim 50, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

52. The system of claim 51, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.